

## ספר תהילים צז | Tehillim / Psalms 97

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### What we do in this life DOES Matter!

א יהוה מלך תגל הארץ In this week's study from *Tehillim / Psalms 96:1-13*, the Psalm opens saying, *97:1 The Lord reigns, let the earth rejoice; Let the many islands be glad. (NASB)* In this psalm, the psalmist calls upon the islands to rejoice before the Lord ascribing the anthropomorphic property of speech and movement. The psalmist continues saying, *ב ענו וערפל סביבו צדק ומשפט מכון כסאו: ג אש לפניו תלה ותלהט סביב צריו: ד האירו ברקיו תבל ראתה ותחל הארץ: ה הרים כדונג נמסו מלפני יהוה מלפני קל הארץ: 97:2 Clouds and thick darkness surround Him; Righteousness and justice are the foundation of His throne. 97:3 Fire goes before Him And burns up His adversaries round about. 97:4 His lightnings lit up the world; The earth saw and trembled. 97:5 The mountains melted like wax at the presence of the Lord, At the presence of the Lord of the whole earth. (NASB)* Why do the Scriptures describe the Lord as having clouds and thick darkness surrounding the Lord? The Torah also provides this description at the mountain of Sinai. Is His glory to be concealed? This is paralleled to God's righteousness and justice. Are His righteousness and justice concealed as well? The psalm continues saying, *ו הגידו השמים צדקו וראו כל העמים, 97:6 The heavens declare His righteousness, And all the peoples have seen His glory. (NASB)* Note the parallel to the Lord's words following the rejection of the people to enter the Promised Land and the Lord saying they saw His glory and will not enter into their inheritance. The psalmist says, *ז יבשו כל עבדי פסל המתהללים באילילים השתחוו-לו כל אלהים: ח שמעה ותשמח ציון ותגלנה בנות יהודה למען משפטך: ט כי אתה יהוה עליון על כל הארץ מאד בעלית על כל אלהים: 97:7 Let all those be ashamed who serve graven images, Who boast themselves of idols; Worship Him, all you gods. 97:8 Zion heard this and was glad, And the daughters of Judah have rejoiced Because of Your judgments, O Lord. 97:9 For You are the Lord Most High over all the earth; You are exalted far above all gods. (NASB)* Ultimately, in the end all will worship the Lord God in heaven as Lord over all. The Psalm concludes saying, *י אהבי יהוה שנאו רע שמר נפשות חסידיו מיד רשעים יצילים: יא אור זרע לצדיק ולישרי-לב שמחה: יב שמחו צדיקים ביהוה והודו לזכר קדשו: 97:10 Hate evil, you who love the Lord, Who preserves the souls of His godly ones; He delivers them from the hand of the wicked. 97:11 Light is sown like seed for the righteous And gladness for the upright in heart. 97:12 Be glad in the Lord, you righteous ones, And give thanks to His holy name. (NASB)*

עברית	Hebrew	ארמי	Aramaic	ελληνικός	Greek
	<b>ספר תהלים פרק צז</b>		<b>ספר טוביה פרק צז</b>		<b>ΨΑΛΜΟΙ 96</b>
	א יהוה מלך תגל הארץ ישמחו איים רבים: ב ענו וערפל סביבו צדק ומשפט מכון כסאו: ג אש לפניו תלה ותלהט סביב צריו: ד האירו ברקיו תבל ראתה ותחל הארץ:		א יהוה מלך תדון ארעא יחדון נג- וואן סגיעין: ב ענני יקרא ואמיט- תא חזור חזור די ליה צדקתא ודינא אתר די מכוון כורסיה: ג אשא קדמוי תהלך ומצלהבא ומשרבב חזור חזור מעיקוי: ד מנהרין בר- קוי תבל חמת ואתחלחלת ארעא:		97:1 τῷ Δαυιδ ὅτε ἡ γῆ αὐτοῦ καθίσταται ὁ κύριος ἐβασίλευσεν ἀγαλλιᾶσθω ἡ γῆ εὐφρανθήτωσαν νῆσοι πολλαί 97:2 νεφέλη καὶ γνόφος κύκλω αὐτοῦ δικαιοσύνη καὶ κρίμα κατόρθωσις τοῦ θρόνου αὐτοῦ 97:3 πῦρ ἐναντίον αὐτοῦ προπορεύεται καὶ φλογιεῖ κύκλω τοὺς ἐχθροὺς αὐτοῦ 97:4 ἔφαναν αἱ ἀστραπαὶ αὐτοῦ τῇ οἰκουμένῃ εἶδεν καὶ ἐσαλεύθη ἡ γῆ

<p>ה הָרִים כְּדוֹג נִמְסוּ מִלְפָּנֵי יְהוָה  מִלְפָּנֵי אֲדוֹן כָּל-הָאָרֶץ: ו הַגִּי  דו הַשָּׁמַיִם צְדָקוֹ וְרָאוּ כָל-הָעַמִּים  כְּבוֹדוֹ: ז יִבְשׁוּ   כָּל-עַבְדֵי פֶסֶל  הַמִּתְהַלְּלִים בְּאֵלִילִים הַשֹּׁתְהוּ-לוֹ  כָּל-אֱלֹהִים: ח שְׁמָעָה וַתִּשְׁמַח    צִיּוֹן וַתִּגְלָנָה בְּנוֹת יְהוּדָה לְמַעַן  מִשְׁפָּטֶיךָ יְהוָה: ט כִּי-אָתָּה יְהוָה  עָלְיוֹן עַל-כָּל-הָאָרֶץ מָאֵד נַעֲלִית  עַל-כָּל-אֱלֹהִים: י אֶהְיֶה יְהוָה  שְׁנָאוֹ רַע שְׂמֵר נַפְשׁוֹת חֲסִידָיו  מִיַּד רְשָׁעִים יְצִילֵם: יא אֹר וְרַע  לְצַדִּיק וּלְיֹשְׁרֵי-לֵב שְׁמָתָה: יב  שְׁמָחוּ צַדִּיקִים בְּיְהוָה וְהוֹדוּ לְזִכְרֹ  ךָ שׁוֹ:</p>	<p>ה טוריא היך שעוא יתמסון מן  קדם יהוה מן קדם ריבון כל ארעא:  ו יתניין אנגלי מרומא צדקתיה  ויחמון כל עמיא עממא איקריה: ז  יבהתון כל פלחי פיסלא דמשתבחין  בטעותא ויסגדון קדמוי כל עמיא  פלחי טעותא: ח שמעת וחדת וחד  דיאת כנישתא דציון ודייצן בנתא  דבית יהודה מן בגלל דיניך יהוה:  ט ארום את הוא יהוה עילאה על כל  יתבי ארעא לחדא אתעלית על כל  דחליא: י רחמיא דיהוה סנו ביש  מטול דקיריס נטיר נפשת חסידוי  מן אידיהון דרשיעי יפצי אינון: יא  נהור דנח ומיטמר לצדיקיא ולתרי  צי ליבא חדווא: יב חדון צדיקיא  במימרא דיהוה ואודון לדוכרן שום  קודשיה:</p>	<p>97:5 τὰ ὄρη ἐτάκησαν ὡσεὶ κηρὸς  ἀπὸ προσώπου κυρίου ἀπὸ προσώπου  κυρίου πάσης τῆς γῆς 97:6 ἀνήγγειλαν  οἱ οὐρανοὶ τὴν δικαιοσύνην αὐτοῦ  καὶ εἶδον πάντες οἱ λαοὶ τὴν δόξαν  αὐτοῦ 97:7 αἰσχυθῆτωσαν πάντες  οἱ προσκυνοῦντες τοῖς γλυπτοῖς οἱ  ἐγκαυχώμενοι ἐν τοῖς εἰδώλοις αὐτῶν  προσκυνήσατε αὐτῷ πάντες οἱ ἄγγελοι  αὐτοῦ 97:8 ἤκουσεν καὶ εὐφράνθη  Σιων καὶ ἠγαλλίασαντο αἱ θυγατέρες  τῆς Ἰουδαίας ἕνεκεν τῶν κριμάτων  σου κύριε 97:9 ὅτι σὺ εἶ κύριος ὁ  ὑψιστος ἐπὶ πᾶσαν τὴν γῆν σφόδρα  ὑπερυψώθης ὑπὲρ πάντας τοὺς θεοὺς  97:10 οἱ ἀγαπῶντες τὸν κύριον μισεῖτε  πονηρόν φυλάσσει κύριος τὰς ψυχὰς  τῶν ὀσίων αὐτοῦ ἐκ χειρὸς ἀμαρτωλῶν  ῥύσεται αὐτούς 97:11 φῶς ἀνέτειλεν  τῷ δικαίῳ καὶ τοῖς εὐθέσι τῇ καρδίᾳ  εὐφροσύνη 97:12 εὐφράνθητε δίκαιοι  ἐπὶ τῷ κυρίῳ καὶ ἔξομολογεῖσθε τῇ  μνήμῃ τῆς ἀγιοσύνης αὐτοῦ</p>
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<p><b>Tehillim / Psalms 96</b>            97:1 The Lord reigns, let the earth rejoice; Let the many islands be glad. 97:2 Clouds and thick darkness surround Him; Righteousness and justice are the foundation of His throne. 97:3 Fire goes before Him And burns up His adversaries round about. 97:4 His lightnings lit up the world; The earth saw and trembled. 97:5 The mountains melted like wax at the presence of the Lord, At the presence of the Lord of the whole earth. 97:6 The heavens declare His righteousness, And all the peoples have seen His glory. 97:7 Let all those be ashamed who serve graven images, Who boast themselves of idols; Worship Him, all you gods. 97:8 Zion heard this and was glad, And the daughters of Judah have rejoiced Because of Your judgments, O Lord. 97:9 For You are the Lord Most High over all the earth; You are exalted far above all gods. 97:10 Hate evil, you who love the Lord, Who preserves the souls of His godly ones; He delivers them from the hand of the wicked. 97:11 Light is sown like seed for the righteous And gladness for the upright in heart. 97:12 Be glad in the Lord, you righteous ones, And give thanks to His holy name. (NASB)</p>	<p><b>Toviyah / Psalms 96</b>            97:1 The Lord reigns, let the earth rejoice, let the many isles be glad. 97:2 Clouds of glory and darkness are around him; righteousness and justice are the place where his throne is set. 97:3 Fire will go before him, and it burns around his oppressors. 97:4 His lightnings illuminate the world; the earth saw and trembled. 97:5 The mountains will melt like wax in the presence of the Lord, in the presence of the master of all the earth. 97:6 The angels of the height will tell of his righteousness, and all the peoples will see his glory. 97:7 All who worship idols will be ashamed, who pride themselves on a false god; and all the peoples who worship a false god will bow down in his presence. 97:8 The assembly of Zion has heard and rejoiced, and the daughters of the house of Judah exult, because of your judgments, O Lord. 97:9 For you are the Lord, the supreme one over all the inhabitants of the earth; you are greatly exalted over all that is revered. 97:10 O you who love the Lord, hate evil, because the Almighty protects the souls of his pious ones; from the hands of the wicked he will deliver them. 97:11 Light has shone and is hidden for the righteous, and joy for the upright of heart. 97:12 Be glad, O righteous, in the word of the Lord, and give thanks at the mention of his holy name. (EMC)</p>	<p><b>Psalmoi / Psalms 96</b>            For David, when his land is established. 97:1 The Lord reigns, let the earth exult, let many islands rejoice. 97:2 Cloud, and darkness are round about him; righteousness and judgment are the establishment of his throne. 97:3 Fire shall go before him, and burn up his enemies round about. 97:4 His lightnings appeared to the world; the earth saw, and trembled. 97:5 The mountains melted like wax at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the Lord of the whole earth. 97:6 The heavens have declared his righteousness, and all the people have seen his glory. 97:7 Let all that worship graven images be ashamed, who boast of their idols; worship him, all ye his angels. 97:8 Sion heard and rejoiced; and the daughters of Judea exulted, because of thy judgments, O Lord. 97:9 For thou art Lord most high over all the earth; thou art greatly exalted above all gods. 97:10 Ye that love the Lord, hate evil; the Lord preserves the souls of his saints; he shall deliver them from the hand of sinners. 97:11 Light is sprung up for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart. 97:12 Rejoice in the Lord, ye righteous; and give thanks for a remembrance of his holiness. (LXX)</p>
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א יהוה מלך תגל הארץ. In this week's study from *Tehillim / Psalms 96:1-13*, the Psalm opens saying, *97:1 The Lord reigns, let the earth rejoice; Let the many islands be glad. (NASB)* The psalmist calls upon the islands to rejoice before the Lord ascribing the anthropomorphic property of speech and movement. The word anthropomorphism comes from two Greek words, (i) anthropos (man) and (ii) morphe (form). Therefore, an anthropomorphism is when the Lord God appears to us or manifests Himself to us in human form or even attributes to Himself human characteristics. Onkelos, the author of the Targum Onkelos (Aramaic Translation of the Torah), often renders the name of the Lord using substitutions such as

“the glory of the Lord,” “the Word of the Lord,” and “the fear of the Lord.” Similarly, he translates “He saw” and “He knew,” referring to the Lord as “it was revealed before Him,” the phrase “He went down” is translated as “He revealed Himself,” and “He heard” becomes “it was heard before Him,” and other similar examples may be found in the Aramaic Translation of the Tanach. If the same verb is used in the Scriptures to describe an action of God and of man, Onkelos uses two different words in order to distinguish clearly between the Lord God in heaven and mankind (examples may be found in *Bereshit / Genesis 32:29, 40:8, Shemot / Exodus 14:31, etc.*). In the Rabbinic literature, at times the rabbis also utilize anthropomorphic language in order to drive home a moral lesson. For example, the Lord God’s “descent” onto the Mountain of Sinai is used to describe the following exhortation, “Let a man always learn from his Creator, for here the Holy One blessed be He forsook all of the mountains and high hills and caused His presence to rest on the lowly Mt. Sinai” (*Talmud Bavli Sotah 5a*). Similarly, on the third day after the circumcision of Abraham, the rabbis say, “the Holy One blessed be He said to the ministering angels: Let us go down and visit the sick man.” The following are a few biblical examples on the use of anthropomorphisms.

### Biblical examples

#### 1. Human actions: He changed His mind, relented, remembered, rested.

- ***Shemot / Exodus 32:14***, “So the Lord changed His mind about the harm which He said He would do to His people.”
- ***2 Samuel 24:16***, “When the angel stretched out his hand toward Jerusalem to destroy it, the Lord relented from the calamity, and said to the angel who destroyed the people, “It is enough! Now relax your hand!”
- ***Bereshit / Gen. 9:16***, “When the bow is in the cloud, then I will look upon it, to remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth.”
- ***Bereshit / Gen. 2:2***, “And by the seventh day God completed His work which He had done; and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done.”

#### 2. Human emotions: sorrow, jealousy, pity, regret.

- ***Bereshit / Gen. 6:6***, “And the Lord was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart.”
- ***Shemot / Exodus 20:5***, “You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me.”
- ***Judges 2:18***, “...for the Lord was moved to pity by their groaning because of those who oppressed and afflicted them.”
- ***1 Samuel 15:35***, “And Samuel did not see Saul again until the day of his death; for Samuel grieved over Saul. And the Lord regretted that He had made Saul king over Israel.”

#### 3. Human physique: hands, face, mouth, eyes, arm.

- *Shemot / Exodus 7:5*, “And the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord, when I stretch out My hand on Egypt and bring out the sons of Israel from their midst.”
- *Bamidbar / Numbers 6:24*, “The Lord make His face shine on you, and be gracious to you.”
- *Tehillim / Psalm 33:6*, “By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and by the breath of His mouth all their host.”
- *Tehillim / Psalm 34:15*, “The eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous, and His ears are open to their cry.”
- *Tehillim / Psalm 89:10*, “Thou Thyself didst crush Rahab like one who is slain; Thou didst scatter Thine enemies with Thy mighty arm.”

The use of anthropomorphisms is not foreign to the bible. In the opening verse of *Tehillim / Psalms 97*, the author of the psalm speaks of the islands being glad before the Lord. The psalmist describes the majesty of God using anthropomorphisms for the islands to give praise to the Lord saying, אִי הָיָה מְלֶךְ תִּגַּל, *97:1 The Lord reigns, let the earth rejoice; Let the many islands be glad. (NASB)* The majesty, power, and glory of God is recognized of His creation, even the islands themselves give glory and rejoice before the Lord, unlike man who chooses to ignore and not give credit where credit is due, our maker. The psalmist’s use of the anthropomorphism is to emphasize the difference between man and God’s creation, and the stubbornness of man to acknowledge the Lord reigns and to rejoice because of who He is, merciful, patient, loving, and kind.

The psalmist continues saying, ב עָנָן וְעָרְפֶל סָבְיָו וּמִשְׁפָּט מְכוֹן כְּסָאוֹ: ג אֵשׁ לְפָנָיו תִּלְהָט סָבִיב, *97:2 Clouds and thick darkness surround Him; Righteousness and justice are the foundation of His throne. 97:3 Fire goes before Him And burns up His adversaries round about. 97:4 His lightnings lit up the world; The earth saw and trembled. 97:5 The mountains melted like wax at the presence of the Lord, At the presence of the Lord of the whole earth. (NASB)* Why do the Scriptures describe the Lord as having clouds and thick darkness surrounding the Lord? If the Lord is a God of light as referring to righteousness, holiness, and truth, why is He described as being shrouded in darkness? Maimonides describes the reason in the following way.

***The Guide for the Perplexed, Part 3, 9:1***

*THE corporeal element in man is a large screen and partition that prevents him from perfectly perceiving abstract ideals: this would be the case even if the corporeal element were as pure and superior as the substance of the spheres; how much more must this be the case with our dark and opaque body. However great the exertion of our mind may be to comprehend the Divine Being or any of the ideals, we find a screen and partition between Him and ourselves. Thus the prophets frequently hint at the existence of a partition between God and us. They say He is concealed from us in vapors, in darkness, in mist, or in a thick cloud: or use similar figures to express that on account of our bodies we are unable to comprehend His essence. This is the meaning of the words, “Clouds and darkness are round about Him” (Ps. 97:2). The prophets tell us that the difficulty consists in the grossness of our substance: they do not imply, as might be gathered from the literal meaning of their words, that God is corporeal, and is invisible because He is surrounded by thick clouds, vapors, darkness, or mist. This figure is also expressed in the passage, “He made darkness His secret place” (Ps. 18:12). The object of God revealing Himself in thick clouds, darkness, vapors, and mist was to teach this lesson; for every prophetic vision contains some lesson by means of allegory; that mighty vision, therefore, though the greatest of all visions, and above all comparison,*

viz., His revelation in a thick cloud, did not take place without any purpose, it was intended to indicate that we cannot comprehend Him on account of the dark body that surrounds us. It does not surround God, because He is incorporeal. A tradition is current among our people that the day of the revelation on Mount Sinai was misty, cloudy, and a little rainy. Comp. “Lord, when thou went forth from Seir, when thou marchedst out of the field of Edom, the earth trembled, and the heavens dropped water” (Judges 5:4). The same idea is expressed by the words “darkness, clouds, and thick darkness” (Deut. 4:11). The phrase does not denote that darkness surrounds God, for with Him there is no darkness, but the great, strong, and permanent light, which, emanating from Him, illuminates all darkness, as is expressed by the prophetic simile, “And the earth shined with His glory” (Ezek. 43:2).

Maimonides speaks of man not being able to understand because of his nature. He says we have a screen fixed in place due to sin which prevents us from seeing the corporeal element. The reason the Lord is described as residing in clouds and darkness is because our bodies are unable to comprehend Him. It is our bodies that are shrouded in darkness and it is difficult for us to peer through the darkness. The Lord God revealing Himself in thick clouds, darkness, vapors, and mist was to teach us a lesson, that the Lord manifesting himself did not occur for no particular reason, this was intended to show us that we are unable to comprehend Him on account of the darkness that is within us. Therefore, it is only by the mercy of God that we are able to see or hear anything in relation to His revelation. This is the point of the many references in the rabbinic literature of the Lord God our Father in heaven being the one who works in our lives, revealing Himself, drawing us near, and giving us the desire to live for him, and creating in us a new man. These same concepts may be found in the Apostolic Writings because they are rooted in the traditions passed on according to first century Judaism.

The psalm states, **ג** אִשׁ לִפְנֵי תִלְדָּה וְתִלְהֹט סְבִיב צָרָיו: ד האירו ברקיו תביל ראתה ותחיל הארץ: ה הרים, *97:3 Fire goes before Him And burns up His adversaries round about. 97:4 His lightnings lit up the world; The earth saw and trembled. 97:5 The mountains melted like wax at the presence of the Lord, At the presence of the Lord of the whole earth. (NASB)* The psalmist describes the Lord as a consuming fire of which none are able to withstand. Ezekiel describes the Lord in a similar fashion saying the following.

**Ezekiel 39:19-31**

*For I have decreed in My indignation and in My blazing wrath: On that day, a terrible earthquake shall befall the land of Israel. ורעשו מפני דגי הים ועוף השמים ותית השודה וכל-הרמש הרמש על-האדמה וכל-האדם אשר על-פני האדמה ונהרסו ההרים ונפלו המדרגות וכל-חומה לארץ תפול: The fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the beasts of the field, all creeping things that move on the ground, and every human being on earth shall quake before Me. Mountains shall be overthrown, cliffs shall topple, and every wall shall crumble to the ground. וקראתי עליו: I will then summon the sword against him throughout My mountains—declares the Lord GOD—and every man’s sword shall be turned against his brother. ונשפטתי אתו בידבר ובהם וגשם שוטר ואבני אלגביש אש וגפרית אמטיר עליו: and I will punish him with pestilence and with bloodshed; and I will pour torrential rain, hailstones, and sulfurous fire upon him and his hordes and the many peoples with him. (ס) ותגדלתי והתקדשתי ונודעתי לעיני גוים רבים וידעו כי-אני יהוה: (ס) Thus will I manifest My greatness and My holiness, and make Myself known in the sight of many nations. And they shall know that I am the LORD.*

It is also no surprise the Apostle Paul describes the Lord God and Yeshua the Messiah in a similar manner

## **2 Thessalonians 1:1-12**

*1:1 Paul and Silvanus and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: 1:2 Grace to you and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 1:3 We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brethren, as is only fitting, because your faith is greatly enlarged, and the love of each one of you toward one another grows ever greater; 1:4 therefore, we ourselves speak proudly of you among the churches of God for your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you endure. 1:5 This is a plain indication of God's righteous judgment so that you will be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which indeed you are suffering. 1:6 For after all it is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, 1:7 and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, 1:8 dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. 1:9 These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power; 1:10 when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed for our testimony to you was believed. 1:11 To this end also we pray for you always, that our God will count you worthy of your calling, and fulfill every desire for goodness and the work of faith with power; 1:12 so that the name of our Lord Jesus will be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ. (NASB)*

The perseverance and faith in the midst of persecutions and afflictions are paralleled to the one being counted as worthy of the kingdom of God. What we do in this life matters! Yeshua is described as coming with his angels with flaming fire dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord and Savior Yeshua. These who receive this punishment will be paid with eternal destruction away from the presence of God and from the glory of His power. What is the glory of God's power? Is this not the power of God to overcome sin, and to draw us to Himself and His Son Yeshua? This is coupled with the idea of being counted worthy of the kingdom. This is related to our cooperative work, as Paul describes as “*fulfill every desire for goodness and the work of faith with power*” (1:11) and the purpose of our good works, something of which is expected of God's children, *1:12 so that the name of our Lord Jesus will be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ. (NASB)* This is the description of the Lord from the beginning, as the Torah also provides this description at the mountain of Sinai. The glory of God, as it is described by Paul is not something to be concealed. This is the righteousness of God in our lives, who having made us righteous in His Son, we are now expected to live righteous and holy lives, which is the calling we are given as His children. This is the fruit that is the product of our faith. The question each of us needs to ask is “*If I am not seeking these things, if I have no fruit of this kind, has salvation really come to my life and do I really believe the Scriptures and the message of the Messiah Yeshua?*”

The psalm continues saying, הַגִּידוּ הַשָּׁמַיִם צְדָקוֹ וְרָאוּ כָּל-הָעַמִּים כְּבוֹדוֹ: 97:6 *The heavens declare His righteousness, And all the peoples have seen His glory. (NASB)* Note the parallel to the Lord's words following the rejection of the people to enter the Promised Land and the Lord saying they saw His glory and will not enter into their inheritance.

## **Bamidbar / Numbers 14:17-24**

*14:17 'But now, I pray, let the power of the Lord be great, just as You have declared, 14:18 'The Lord is slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, forgiving iniquity and transgression; but He will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generations. 14:19 'Pardon, I pray, the iniquity of this people*

according to the greatness of Your lovingkindness, just as You also have forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now.’ 14:20 So the Lord said, ‘I have pardoned them according to your word; 14:21 but indeed, as I live, all the earth will be filled with the glory of the Lord. 14:22 ‘Surely all the men who have seen My glory and My signs which I performed in Egypt and in the wilderness, yet have put Me to the test these ten times and have not listened to My voice, 14:23 shall by no means see the land which I swore to their fathers, nor shall any of those who spurned Me see it. 14:24 ‘But My servant Caleb, because he has had a different spirit and has followed Me fully, I will bring into the land which he entered, and his descendants shall take possession of it. (NASB)

The people did not trust in the Lord God in heaven, they trusted in themselves, and they expressed their faith in themselves both verbally, in their hearts (the night long grumbling), and by their actions (wanting to stone Joshua and Caleb). Because of their lack of faith, the Lord wanted to destroy them, but Moshe prayed on their behalf, and the Lord relented and caused them to wander in the wilderness 40 years such that none of those who had seen the glory of God, His power at work, would enter into the Promised Land (*Bamidbar / Numbers 14:22-23*). Our daily prayer should be that the Lord would create within us the same spirit both Caleb and Joshua had that followed the Lord fully, such that we may enter into what the Lord has planned for us.

ז יבשו | כל-עבדי פסל המתהללים באילילים השתחוו-לו כל-אלהים: ח  
 שְׁמֵעָה וְתִשְׁמַח | צִיּוֹן וְתִגְלַנָּה בְּנוֹת יְהוּדָה לְמַעַן מִשְׁפָּטֶיךָ יְהוָה: ט כִּי-אַתָּה יְהוָה עֲלִיּוֹן עַל-כָּל-הָאָרֶץ מֵאֵד נְעֻלֶיךָ  
 : 97:7 *Let all those be ashamed who serve graven images, Who boast themselves of idols; Worship Him, all you gods. 97:8 Zion heard this and was glad, And the daughters of Judah have rejoiced Because of Your judgments, O Lord. 97:9 For You are the Lord Most High over all the earth; You are exalted far above all gods. (NASB)* Ultimately, in the end all will worship the Lord God in heaven as Lord over all. The psalmist speaks of all being ashamed who serve graven images. The graven image is an image carved out of stone, wood, or metal. It generally consists of a statue of a person or animal, or a relief carving in a wall or a pole. It is differentiated from a molten image in the sense that a molten image was formed by pouring melted metal into a cast. Many idols were carved from some material such as wood, and then overlay with gold leaf, as in the case of the Asherah poles and the Baals. Egyptian hieroglyphics are also considered a graven image. The progression of idol worship in a false religion begins with the recognition of a power other than the creator God that controls the natural forces. The presence of this power is believed to dwell within the object. Once the idol is developed, the people proceed to make physical images which may then be carried with the parishioner. The people then seeks this idol god for something, such as good crops or for fertility in child bearing (*Ephesians 5:5 and Colossians 3:5*). Temples are then created for these idol gods which are not gods. The Lord commanded according to *Shemot / Exodus 20:4-5*, “You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. You shall not worship them or serve them.” This is the intent of the command that “You shall have no other gods before Me,” which specifically forbids the creation of idols. We are told that we should not create anything in heaven or on earth, suggesting that it is equally dangerous to create an image of the Lord God Himself. The psalmist declares “... the heavens declare his righteousness,” (*Tehillim / Psalms 50:6, 97:6*) indicating the Lord has displayed plenty of evidence for His power and Might. All the people seeing his glory, as it is manifested in the heavens, and in the power which he puts forth on the earth, that is, the people had the opportunity of seeing the power of God (His great and wondrous works). They did not appreciate all the Lord had done for them, and so they turn to the idol of their own making, they trusted in themselves for deliverance rather than trusting in the Lord God in heaven. The rabbis speak of the heavens declaring the righteousness of God in the sense that the inhabitants of the heavens (angels) bear witness to the justice and truth of God. Radak and Rashi have the following to say concerning these things.



**Radak on Psalms 19:2, Part 1**

*The heavens declare the glory of God : - There are interpreters (Targumist and others) who take this as like “Or speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee” (Job 12:8), and “Ask now the beasts, and they shall teach thee” (ibid. 7) ; and so The heavens declare, for from the wonders and mighty works which man sees in the heavens he declares the glory of God. And this is what he (means when he) says : There is no speech nor words; Their voice cannot be heard, suggesting not that they declare in words, but from what man sees in them the sons of men declare the glory of God. We are able to explain declare with reference to the heavens and the firmament themselves, for by their course and circuit in an appointed order the glory of God - Blessed be He ! - is seen ; and that is the “declaring” and “telling,” on the analogy of “He sendeth out His commandment upon earth ; His word runneth very swiftly.” (Ps. 147:15) And when he says : There is no speech nor words (he means) no words like the words of men, but the work they do stands for the words, and constitutes the “declaring” and the “telling”; and so he says : And their speech to the end of the world. The great teacher of righteousness, the great sage our Rabbi Moses, has interpreted (Guide for the Perplexed, 2. 5) “declare” of the heavens, for his opinion and that of the Philosophers is that the spheres are living intelligences, serving God and praising Him with great praise, and singing His glory in great and mighty songs. And so he says : The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament telleth His handywork, notwithstanding that the “declaring” and the “telling” are not with mouth and tongue. This is what he (means when he) says : There is neither speech nor language; Their voice cannot be heard, but the “declaring” and the “telling” are to them like an image of the words and praises which a man forms in his mind without their actual issuing forth in speech.*

**Rashi on Deuteronomy 32:2, Part 1**

*יֵעָרַף כַּמָּטָר לִקְחֵי MY DOCTRINE DROPPETH AS RAIN — This is the evidence that ye will have to give: that in your presence I declare that the Torah which I gave to Israel (לקחתי) is life to the world as the rain which is life to the world (cf. Siphre) — even as the heavens drop down dew and rain. יֵעָרַף means, IT DROPS. Similar is (Psalms 65:12) “[And thy paths] drop fatness” (ירעפון), where עָרַף = רָעַף); (Deuteronomy 33:28) “[also his heavens] shall drop down (יערפו) dew”.*

Both Radak and Rashi state the glory of God is apparent in His creation. The heavens declare the glory of God because He is who established and appointed the order (operation, function) of creation. Rashi states that the rain that comes to water the crops are evidence for the glory of God and His mercies.

The Psalm concludes saying, **יְהוָה יִהְיֶה שֵׁנְאוֹ רַע שִׁמְרַן נַפְשׁוֹת חַסִּידָיו מִיַּד רָשָׁעִים יִצְיָלֵם: יֵא אֹר זָרַע, 97:10 Hate evil, you who love the Lord, Who preserves the souls of His godly ones; He delivers them from the hand of the wicked. 97:11 Light is sown like seed for the righteous And gladness for the upright in heart. 97:12 Be glad in the Lord, you righteous ones, And give thanks to His holy name. (NASB) The Lord God is powerful and able to deliver His people from all kinds of adversity. He works in the hearts of men to do His will, both the righteous and the wicked. The commentary *Or Chaim on Bereshit / Genesis 1:1, Part 22* has the following to say concerning these concluding verses in *Tehillim / Psalms 97*.**

**Or Chaim on Genesis 1:1, Part 22**

*The whole section also hints to the creation of man - who is the main goal of the creation - in the following way: In the beginning, when God created man, He created him from the source of spirituality, which is hinted by the word, heavens, and from the source of physicality, which is hinted by the word, earth. And you will find that our Rabbis, of blessed memory, hinted [to*

*this by explaining] (Sanhedrin 91b), what the verse stated (Psalms 50:4), “He called to the heavens above” to be the spirit [and] “and upon the earth” to be the body, which is built from the earth. And His will in this, may He be blessed, is that through the actions of man, he will have the power to transform matter, which is the body, until it is considered to be form. And behold, you will find (Shabbat 152b) that the righteous ones do not return to the dust, given that they purify their matter, until it becomes spiritual; as was written by Rabbi Y. Arama, of blessed memory, and these are his words, “and it is the power of the perfect ones to change matter into form.” And this is why they, of blessed memory, said (Berakhot 18a) that the righteous ones are called living even in their death, since the material side has become spiritual, which relates to life; and that the evil ones are called dead even in their lifetimes, from the angle that even the spirituality in them becomes material and [like] earth, which relates to the lifeless objects which are [therefore] dead. And it hints to these two characteristics when it states “the heavens and the earth,” in the following way: if they merit [it], behold, they raise up the material part of themselves which is hinted by “the earth” and they connect it and it becomes one entity with the “heavens.” And if they do not merit [it], they transform the part of spirituality within them to the trait of “earth” and the form becomes matter. And this is what it is stating, “and the earth.” And its stating, “and the earth was chaos and void” here is hinting to what occurred in the times that the physical side overpowers which is the ‘earth’ and [the person] is emptied out of spirituality; as it is translated [by Onkelos into Aramaic], “desolate and empty;” “and darkness,” which is the evil impulse that is called in their holy words (Zohar, Bereishit 63)...*

The rabbis recognize the significance of the manner in which man was created, both spiritual and physical, emphasizing the importance of what we do, how we live for the Lord, in the sense that “... *through the actions of man, he will have the power to transform matter, which is the body, until it is considered to be form.*” This indicates that the Lord is working in the lives of His people to transform them, similar to what Paul wrote the Lord is conforming us unto the likeness of His son (*Romans 8:29*). The major point here is to recognize the work of God in our lives and if we do not see the Lord actively working in our lives, we need to ask questions why? It is important to not what the rabbis say, “*And behold, you will find (Shabbat 152b) that the righteous ones do not return to the dust, given that they purify their matter, until it becomes spiritual...*” They are speaking of walking in the spirit, doing so is accomplished by obeying God’s Torah, and turning from sin. This is the meaning of those who are alive, even in death, and those who are called dead, even when they are alive. Those who are called dead are as lifeless objects, similar to those of molten images (idols). We are not to be as idols, useless and dead, because we are called as God’s children to be righteous and holy. Without the Lord’s help, we could not do so. This is why it is important to ask questions and to seek for the Lord God in heaven to work in our lives in Yeshua His Messiah. This is also the meaning of having a heart and a spirit that seeks the Lord, a very important attribute of God’s people. Let’s pray!

Heavenly Father,

We ascribe glory, power, and praise to Your Name! Lord we desire to seek and serve You all of our lives. Lord help us daily to have the strength to stand for truth and life, to have faith in Yeshua and a devotion to Your Word, and to overcome sin. We thank You Lord for Your continued faithfulness to Your promises. Thank You Lord for giving us the faith to believe in Yeshua the Messiah and for always calling our hearts back to You! Please have mercy on us, forgive us for our sins. Help us to grow in our faith, to walk in the spirit, and apply these truths to our lives. We praise Your Holy Name and give You all of the honor, and the glory, and the praise forever and ever.

In Yeshua’s (Jesus’) Name we pray! Amen!

Be Blessed in Yeshua, Christ our Messiah!

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הללויה לאדוננו מורנו ורבינו ישוע מלך המשיח לעולם ועד:  
Hallelujah for our Lord, our Teacher, our Rabbi,  
“Yeshua” King Messiah forever and ever

## Notes